

Serial No.: 09/882,368
Docket No.: 70655.7900

REMARKS

Applicants hereby reply to the Office Action dated November 29, 2004 within the shortened three month statutory period for response. Upon entry of the foregoing amendments, Applicants amend claim 1, so claims 1-17 are still pending in the application. Support for the amendments may be found in the originally-filed specification, claims, and figures. No new matter has been introduced by these amendments. Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

The Examiner rejects claims 1-17 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Musgrove et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,725,222. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Musgrove generally discloses a method for storing product information from a plurality of merchants within a centralized shopping server, providing product information from multiple merchants to users, and consummating order transactions relating to one or more user selected products. While Musgrove discloses retrieving product information from merchants and storing the information within a database at a shopping server, the Musgrove disclosure is limited to the storage of product data consistent with a common database implementation as known in the art. According to Musgrove, "For example, a user of client computer 12, i.e. a shopper, can select a product, or plural products, for purchase by navigating Web pages stored on shopping server 20 and populated with product information from product database 26. Product database 26 can include product descriptions, pricing, delivery dates, and other product information for plural merchants and culled from merchant servers 40" (column 5, lines 16-23). Musgrove further discloses that such product information may be gathered from merchant sites by web bots or any other manner.

Those of ordinary skill will appreciate that the standard database implementation as disclosed by Musgrove would facilitate storage of merchant products within database records. For example, a single merchant may offer several varieties of coffee tables; therefore each coffee table would have a corresponding database record comprising an image of the coffee table, a description, manufacturer information, price, shipping options, etc. Further, the database of Musgrove may contain a number of database records relating to an identical coffee table that is offered for sale by several different merchants. Continuing with the example above, Merchants

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A, B and C each offer an identical coffee table; therefore each record corresponding to each of merchants A, B and C may contain very similar information. Each of merchants A, B and C database records may contain an identical image of the same coffee table.

In other words, the Musgrove system is very inefficient because it stores redundant copies of identical information, so Musgrove does not disclose or suggest a normalized database, wherein redundant data is eliminated and replaced with keys in a one-to-many relationship. By moving an image to a different database table and assigning it a unique key, any number of records from a merchant table may reference the single image, thereby eliminating the redundancy found in a standard database implementation. However, it is not possible for Musgrove to create normalized data because Musgrove does not disclose or suggest any logic that must be employed to determine if a merchant's product is identical to a previously-stored product, and if so, add a key to reference the product image from another table.

As such, Musgrove does not disclose a database normalization process wherein a determination is made on whether the source of product information is from a merchant or a supplier, such that an image from a supplier can be stored, so it may be referenced by any number of merchants. As such, Musgrove does not disclose or suggest "determining a source of said product data, wherein said source is at least one of said providers and suppliers; associating a key with said product data, when said product data is associated with one of said suppliers and no key is associated with said product data; adding said key to a merchant record;" as required by amended independent claim 1.

The Examiner also rejects claims 2-17 which variously depend from independent claim 1. Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections. Applicants assert that dependent claims 2-17 are differentiated from the cited references for at least the same reasons as set forth above for differentiating independent claim 1 from the cited references, as well as their own respective features.

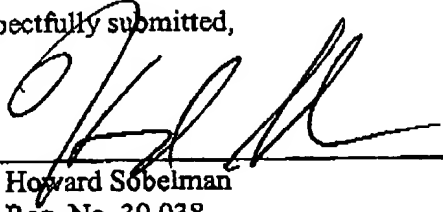
Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims are in condition for allowance. No new matter is added in this Response. Reconsideration of the application is thus requested. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees which may be required, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-2814. Applicants invite the Office to telephone the

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undersigned if the Examiner has any questions regarding this Reply or the present application in general.

Respectfully submitted,

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By: 
Howard Sobelman
Reg. No. 39,038

SNELL & WILMER L.L.P.
400 E. Van Buren
One Arizona Center
Phoenix, Arizona 85004
Phone: 602-382-6228
Fax: 602-382-6070
Email: hsobelman@swlaw.com